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Revilo Oliver, Right-Winger

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It has struck most Americans by now that the John Birch Society is cuckoo, paranoiac and so irresponsible that reading something like the organization's monthly magazine, "American Opinion," is really similar to walking through a well-lit, sun-drenched cave.

The February issue, however, is one for the records. In it, Revilo P. Oliver, professor of classical languages at the University of Illinois, writes about the Kennedy assassination. Called "Marxman-ship in Dallas," the article comes through as an attack on the late President Kennedy, President Johnson, Attorney General Kennedy, the FBI, the Justice Department and other such "ComSymps" operating in the Republic.

One of the explanations Oliver offers for the assassination is that it "was the result of one of the rifts that not infrequently occur within the management of the Communist conspiracy, whose satraps sometimes liquidate one another..." The article claims that Mr. Kennedy may have been shot because he was falling behind in the Communist time-table for a domestic take-over. Oliver goes on to charge that the late president had planned to subvert and sabotage the nation's defense; that the CIA and the FBI conspired with Kennedy and Castro to set up a fake invasion at the Bay of Pigs; that the assassination "may have been necessary as the

only means of avoiding or even long deferring national scandals so flagrant as to shock the whole of our brainwashed and hypnotized populace back to sanity..."

Oliver says more than this. Anyone who can write this sort of drivel has to write on and on until the demons are expunged. But there is an interesting sidelight in the case of Professor Oliver. Queried by reporters, other teachers at Illinois said Oliver was a remarkable scholar, a first-rate teacher and one who never carried his political opinions into a classroom.

His fellow-teachers admit that his quirk about communism in high places—in the FBI and the CIA, for example—is embarrassing, but it certainly hasn't prevented him from being what a good teacher is supposed to be.

So Professor Oliver—a virulent, slashing right-winger when he isn't teaching Latin and classical Greek—joins a host of other campus eccentrics behind the protective shield of the academic community. We can argue with Oliver's ideas and his way of expressing them, but not with the right of his college to protect him.

In another society, even in liberal but libel-conscious Great Britain, Professor Oliver probably would have been silenced a long time ago. In this nation, which he believes is controlled by Communists and populated with "brainwashed and hypnotized" people, he's a free agent.